



Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological Projects, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048, (212) 432-5707, e-mail address: NYABG@worldnet.att.net, for the purpose of providing current information on New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context.

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TAKING THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson

- 1625 -- The first eleven African men were brought to New Amsterdam, as enslaved persons owned by the government of New Amsterdam, the Dutch West India Company. By name the Dutch records list these men as: Paulo Van Angola, Simon Congo, Big Manuel, Little Manuel, Manuel de Gerrit de Reus, Anthony Portugis Garcia, Peter Santomee, Jan Francisco, Little Anthony, and Jan Fort Orange.
- 1712 -- In response to the harshness of slavery in the city, approximately, thirty black men and two Indians set fire to several buildings in lower Manhattan, six whites were killed. Twenty-seven enslaved Africans were condemned to die.
- 1781 -- The New York State Assembly passed a law granting freedom to all Africans who fought for the state's military force. Africans fought on both sides of the American Revolutionary War.
- 1794 -- The Africans of New York City must cease burying their dead on Broadway. They will be buried instead at the "New African Burying Ground" at Chrystie and Delancey Streets.
- 1827 -- Emancipation Day in New York: July 4, 1827. Enslaved adult men and women were set free. The children of the same were bound to serve a 25 - 27 year indenture term to their former enslavers.
- 1863 -- The Draft Riots of July 13-17 were in response to governmental regulations which allowed for wealthy white New Yorkers to buy their way out of service in the military. Poor Irish men who could not do this protested against these laws by assaulting African New Yorkers, hanging many and mutilating others. This civilian riot is known as the bloodiest on U.S. soil, resulting in the death of hundreds of Africans living in New York.
- 1991-- Archaeologists unearth remains of 18th century Africans near New York's City Hall!

New York Urban History 101

The above facts constitute for many, the big picture of the African presence in early New Amsterdam and New York. Yet even these bare-boned facts are largely unknown to most well informed New Yorkers.

(Continued on page 11)

"There is a debt to the Negro people which America can never repay. At least then, they must make amends"

---- Sojourner Truth



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



The Stamp Campaign Continues

I have been continuing to get signatures and to encourage others to take your marvelous educational tour. When my sister wrote to the office of the postmaster general a couple of years ago, we received a form letter reply that said "stamps must be of national interest in order to issue a special stamp." I guess Bugs Bunny fits that category!!! Thank you for all you have done and are doing to preserve our historical past. Best wishes.

Naomi Chamberlain
White Plains, N.Y.

[Ed. note: For an update on the status and future direction of the African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp campaign, please see page 8].

Feedback

I wish that every African in the world would come to visit this extraordinary project. I think the facilitators operated in perfection. They were very child orientated and knew how to bring every question and remark into focus. Keep up the good work and may Mother, Father God, Creator of the Universe bless your endeavors each and everyday.

Sharon T. Jones
The African Centered School
Washington, D.C.

In 1991 the government wanted to make a building. When they were excavating they found skeletons, and not only one, but there were more than 400 skeletons in that place. I went to the burial site and for me being there was the most sad thing. The burial site was a small place, and I couldn't believe that in that small place there were more than 400 skeletons. Marie-Alice Devieux was the lecturer who told us about the things that the enslaved Africans went through. When I think about that I feel like an African girl and I get mad. It is true what Dr. Michael Blakey said: "how do I know that's my real name if all my people died?" I'm not African, but I believe in human rights, and I think that those skeletons are supposed to sleep in peace.

Candida Ramirez
Leadership Secondary School
Brooklyn, N.Y.

I received your information on the African Burial Ground and I found it very informative, exhilarating and inspirational. I'm an incarcerated young brother who has spent his time becoming politically, historically and culturally aware. This discovery is truly a victory for us Afrikans here

in America because it's very rare that we stumble across such an opportunity to learn a part of our glorious history. I must commend you and your supporters on your success through consistent and sincere efforts in controlling the outcome of this sacred discovery. I can easily see that the future results of this project will be profound in the sense of the Black community appreciating their heritage, and making attempts to redefine our history devoid of external influence.

Allen Jones
C.R.C.C.
Jarrett, Virginia

We both thank you so much for your excellent presentation to our teachers. It was exactly what was needed to further their collaboration on humanities and our focus on collective cooperative work. Additionally, your presentation opened two windows for the audience: (1) the window of knowledge of things not previously known as we know from their evaluations (2) the window of scholarship since most teachers have little opportunity to reconnect themselves to the knowledge and research base of their field or related fields.

Thank you again, for having shared your expertise with us. We are all richer for it.

Richard Stear
Director of English
& Writing

Marilynn Grant
Director of Social Studies
& Multi-cultural Activities
Rochester City School Dist.
Rochester, New York

Voices Against Violence

Families of Victims Against Violence (FOVAV) would like to thank you for the assistance you provided at our 4th annual Mother's Day March Against Violence. The program was successful.

The African Burial Ground holds a very significant meaning for FOVAV. It is a reminder of the historical violence and the continuation of the violence that still besets our communities. Again, your attention to our endeavor was most appreciated. Thank you.

Deborah Dawkins, Coord.
Families of Victims
Against Violence
Brooklyn, N.Y.

**OPEI welcomes letters but reserves
the right to edit for length or clarity.**

Special to the African Burial Ground Project:
**Report on the 1997 U.N. Sub-Commission on the Prevention of
 Discrimination and Protection of Minorities**

by Imam Muhammad Hatim

This article first appeared in The Cornerstone, the African Burial Ground Project Volunteer Newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 3. Deborah A. Wright, Editor. Imam Muhammad Hatim is an NGO/UN representative, Admiral Family Circle, Islamic Community.

For the second consecutive year, a United Nations audience was held spell-bound throughout the discussion given by Dr. Michael L. Blakey on the African Burial Ground Project's latest scientific findings. The briefing, attended by ambassadors, United Nations staff members, and representatives of international non-governmental organizations, was held in Geneva, Switzerland at the United Nations Sub-commission on the Prevention and Protection of Minorities (Sub-Commission). Following the success and interest generated by last year's visit, Dr. Blakey was invited to return with his moving discussion on the oldest known, excavated African cemetery in America.

The Sub-Commission, a part of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, consists of 26 independent human rights experts who make annual reports to its 54 member nations. International non-governmental organizations (NGO's) affiliated with the U.N. Economic and Social Council also participate. Geneva, Switzerland is the headquarters of the Sub-Commission as well as the U.N. Center for Human Rights and Peace Initiatives.

Dr. Blakey's presentation was part of an overall program on African American issues which took place on August 19, 1997 at a briefing



Muhammad Hatim at the OPEI
 Fall 1997 Educators Symposium
 Photo credit: Tamara R. Jubilee

from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Palais des Nation. Other subjects covered included the protection of "group rights" for African Americans according to international treaties to which the U.S. is a signatory, issues of African American Islamic social and cultural rights, family stability, and the administration of justice in the United States.

Speakers included Theodore Eagans, Esq., Lift Every Voice, Inc. (LEV-I), Los Angeles, California; The Admiral Family Circle Islamic Community (Admiral Family), New York; Onaje Mu'id, Malik Shabazz Human Rights Institute (MSHRI), New York City; and Falona Heidelberg, Stanford University Student Chapter of LEVI-I. The host organizations were the African Bureau of Educational Sciences (ABES), Kinshasa, Congo; and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), Budapest, Hungary.

The highlight of the event for many was the slide presentation and discussion by Dr. Blakey. Viewers were awed by descriptions of cultural teeth filings, the photo of a woman buried with a child, and physical evidence of the brutality of

enslavement. During the question and answer period, and speaking directly to the many Africans in the audience, I raised the question, "Those bones are the remains of my ancestors. However, they are also the remains of your ancestors. What are we going to do about the remains of our ancestors?"

In part this question referred to the efforts of the Admiral Family and LEV-I at the 1996 Geneva session, in requesting that every African country issue a commemorative stamp on the African Burial Ground by the year 2,000. Several countries are presently considering this proposal. Additionally, through persistent lobbying, a movement is underway to make the African Burial Ground Project and related memorialization the center piece of President Clinton's "Initiative on Race."

The State Department and the Park Service are also considering a recommendation to place the African Burial Ground on the "World Heritage List" (see page 4). Placement would give the African Burial Ground the same status as Goree Island, which is located off the coast of Senegal, West Africa.

Discussions are taking place to include the African Burial Ground on the UNESCO project on slave trading routes. Identification of the route taken by enslaved Africans project would again make the African Burial Ground an international landmark and renewed focus of research.

For further information please call (212) 870-3597 or fax inquiries to (212) 870-3598. You may also send e-mail to ibn_inc@ibm.net.



CLAIMING OUR PLACE IN HISTORY



by Falona Heidelberg

Currently working with Lift Every Voice Inc. (LEVI) to nominate the African Burial Ground as a World Heritage site, Falona is a concerned citizen and student organizer of Stanford University's Chapter of LEVI-H. Her article first appeared in the International Law Section Newsletter [July 1997] and has been reprinted in this issue of Update with permission.

"The fractures begin in his skull, travel down his spine, radiate toward his ribs, shoot through his legs and then stop. By this time he is dead. This is what researchers know about a life now called Burial 171. The pile of bones belong to an African man who died in New York City more than 200 years ago, one of the 427 skeletons that researchers are studying in a laboratory at Howard University." This chilling description of the remains uncovered in the African Burial Ground appeared in a Baltimore Sun article recounting a story that has largely been forgotten, despite

its tremendous national and international value.

The African Burial Ground was discovered in lower Manhattan, New York, six years ago prior to construction of a 34-story federal building. The site, documented in use from 1712 to 1794, is the resting place of enslaved Africans and their children — the first "African Americans." Some historians believe it may have been in use at an even earlier date.

While more than 10,000 ancestral remains were once located under the cement that now holds skyscrapers and municipal buildings, 427 burials were retrieved and taken to Howard University for analysis.

The African Burial Ground gives physical testimony to the nature of slavery, providing empirical evidence of the conditions under which enslaved Africans survived and information on their health and environment. Outside of its extraordinary scientific merit, it also speaks to the cultural heritage of a people who were forced to migrate to this country, enslaved, and then

further exploited in order to build the United States of America.

The African Burial Ground, the oldest excavated African cemetery within a U.S. urban setting, is more than another archaeological or anthropological project. It is a testimony to the lost history of a people. It tells a story that has been biased or ignored in historical literature, and speaks to the dignity of those forced to endure enslavement not just in America, but all over the world.

Some of the findings include high levels of infant mortality, to the extent that half of the bodies retrieved from the site never reached age 12, and almost half of those children never saw their second birthday; there is also evidence of people being worked past their physical capacity, in some cases, literally worked to death.

The exact ethnic affiliations, sacred practices, and cultural values of these people are currently being researched through the examination of teeth filed in various shapes, waist beads found on the remains, symbols embossed on the coffins, and the positions in which the people where buried.

One international instrument used to give recognition to sites that are seen as being of "outstanding universal value," is the World Heritage Convention, established in 1972. The World Heritage Convention was formed to ensure the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Signatory countries that are parties to this convention nominate sites for their inclusion on the World Heritage List.

Currently, the U.S. cultural sites included on the list are: Mesa Verde, Independence Hall, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, La Forrelexa and San Juan Historic Site in Puerto Rico, the Statue of Liberty, Chaco Culture National Historic Park, Monticello and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and Pueblo de Taos. Surprisingly, given Africans' and African Americans' role in building the foundation of this nation, a celebration of their contributions is glaringly absent. The U.S. government has even failed to indicate any sites that have the potential to be included on the World Heritage List.

These facts, coupled with the need to find solutions to ease racial conflict in this country and the lingering effects of slavery, make it crucial that the African Burial Ground be granted the national and international acclaim needed to fill a chapter of history that has been missing.

The memorialization of the African Burial Ground will be a step in the process of giving memory to a people who were raised to have amnesia concerning their cultural, spiritual, and intellectual heritage. The educational value of this site can play a huge role in undoing the psychological damage inflicted during slavery, not only to African Americans, but to all groups involved. It can also play a significant role in rewriting a history that has been, and largely continues to be, biased in favor of the dominant culture's values.

In order for the African Burial Ground to be recognized for its



From left to right: Jacinth Herbert, Canadian attorney; Dr. Michael L. Blakey, Howard University; Falona Heidelberg, Lift Every Voice, Inc.; Maxwell Chikorowondo, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe

"outstanding universal value" to the world, it must first be a National Historic Landmark. The African Burial Ground has this status. Next an organization must request from the National Parks Service that the site be put on an "indicative list," which is an inventory of all sites within the U.S. that the National Parks Service has indicated are worthy of being nominated.

An organization or a representative of the National Parks Service must then prepare a nomination that must be accepted by the State Department to officially submit the nomination to the United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Subsequently, the nomination then goes through several pre-screening channels internationally to insure it is of "outstanding universal value," and if the site is recommended for inclusion on the World Heritage List, it is then voted on by the World Heritage Committee composed of 21 state representatives. An inscription on this list makes it the responsibility

of the United States to take the necessary steps to protect the site.

International recognition of the African Burial Ground would be symbolic of a larger step towards moving past the painful history of slavery, in order to begin the healing process as a nation, as a global community, and as members of the human family. The remains will be returned to the ground by the year 2000 to ensure the proper respect. Funds have been set aside to build a monument and center for interpretation at the site where the African Burial Ground was uncovered. If you are interested in learning more about this initiative or would like to receive suggestions or assistance on how to assist in making the African Burial Ground a World Heritage Site, please contact:

The Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground, @ U.S. Customs House, 6 World Trade Center, Rm 239, New York, N.Y. 10048, or call (212) 432-5707.



OPEI VOLUNTEERS: THE CORNERSTONE OF THE THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

by Donna Harden Cole
& Deborah A. Wright

When the African Burial Ground (ABG) of lower Manhattan was discovered six years ago in 1991, it was the voluntary activism of the community which helped to bring attention to this historic find. The passion and fervor of their activism helped convince the General Services Administration (GSA) that this was not just another building being built, or just another excavation taking place. The ABG supporters, mostly African Americans, played a major role in influencing the Federal Steering Committee, which was formed to be the community voice for the preservation of the ABG. These supporters impressed upon the GSA that although this was to be a significant housing location for many government agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS), this was also an historic and sacred burial ground.

Costing taxpayers upwards of \$276 million dollars, the fact that public money was to be used to finance this construction was a focal point for many supporters of the ABG. In July 1992, Congress allocated \$3 million dollars to finance a memorialization effort. The community was not impressed, and during a protest at the steps of 26 Federal Plaza (a government building across the street from the ABG), a supporter was seen carrying a sign which declared that "\$3 million dollars nor any amount will...compensate for this disgrace."



Rhonda Best, 1997 Volunteer of the Year. Photo credit: M.A. Devieux

As time passed, the activism became more pronounced, involving a diverse cross section of supporters. Support also came from other communities outside of New York City. The community at large implored public officials like New York State Senator, David Paterson and former NYC Mayor, David N. Dinkins to take action to save the ABG. Their passion elicited the attention of the New York media giving the ABG national, as well as international attention. Within two years of the unearthing of the ABG, countless news articles, stories and two documentary films were produced to tell the world about this historic find. To date five documentary films about the NYC ABG have been produced.

The Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), which opened its doors in 1993, under the direction

of Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, has to date educated over 75,000 people of all backgrounds and ages.

The OPEI volunteer program is another extension of community activism. Many of our volunteers, who represent a wide range of cultures, interests and educational backgrounds, had been involved in the initial controversial activism when the ABG was unearthed in 1991.

Since 1993, OPEI has trained over 150 people as ABG project volunteers in both NYC and Washington, D.C. The volunteers' primary and fundamental role is to 'spread the word' and to keep the public updated on the activities of the ABG project. Volunteers also assist the small OPEI staff during Open House and symposium programs and during the quarterly *Update* newsletter mailings.

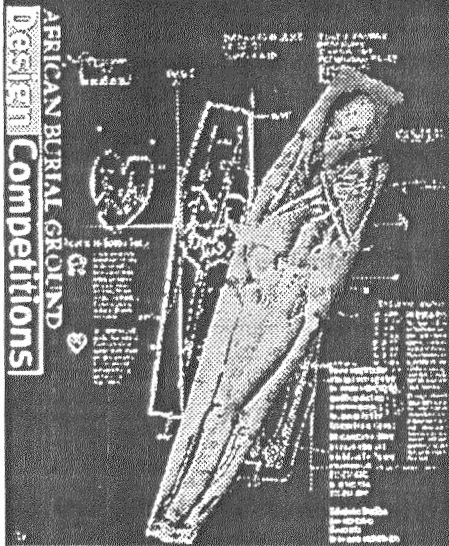
OPEI volunteers have also been instrumental in the efforts to obtain an ABG commemorative stamp. After two rejections by the U.S. Postal Service, and a brief lull in the commemorative stamp efforts, OPEI volunteers and other interested parties have decided to reactivate the ABG stamp petition drive as of October 25, 1997 (see page 8).

OPEI trains community members who wish to be ABG project volunteers four times a year. The next volunteer training will be January 17, 1998. Volunteer training sessions usually include a prayer vigil at the site, a Foley Square Laboratory tour, and updates on the artifacts from the burial ground as well as current scientific analysis of the remains housed at Howard University.



AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MEMORIALIZATION UPDATE

From the Office of the Project Executive, Peggy King Jorde



Memorial brochure created by S&S Graphics

by Steven Coleman

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is currently administering two national design competitions that will result in commissions for a Memorial and an Interpretive Center environment honoring the National Historic Landmark African Burial Ground in the City of New York.

On September 13, 1997, the GSA issued a formal solicitation for professional services to design and build an Interpretive Center environment to be located within the federal office building at 290 Broadway in New York City. The closing date for the Interpretive Center solicitation was December 2, 1997 (Call for actual solicitation and amendments).

The African Burial Ground Interpretive Center is intended to be a unique environment that will inform, engage, and enlighten visitors about the extensive findings surrounding the eighteenth century

cemetery and New York's African ancestry. For additional information on solicitations, please contact our office.

Outreach:

Announcement of the national design competitions was released by GSA and the Memorialization Office on March 13, 1997. Various national, local, and professional publications carried the news, including N.Y. Amsterdam News, Downtown Express, Architectural Record, Sphere, and U.S. News and World Report. Television and radio announcements were carried on FOX 5's 'Good Day New York,' WQCD 101.9, and WBAI-Pacifica. If you're aware of additional media announcements, please let us know.

Competition Events:

Potential competitors participated in a Pre-Proposal Conference and Networking Session on Monday, October 6th at the Court of International Trade in lower Manhattan. That evening a symposium and reception were held at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York City. The symposium was a unique opportunity for potential competitors and the broader community to dialogue with the distinguished African Americans advisors who will participate in the review and selection of the winning commissions for both competitions. The Memorialization Office anticipates holding another such symposium after issuance of the Memorial Design solicitation.

Special Announcements:

Thanks to the Cooper-Hewitt,

National Design Museum, the New York Coalition of Black Architects/ NOMA, the American Institute of Architects, Minority Resources Committee, and S&S Graphics for their invaluable assistance. Also, thanks to community members who attended and continue to serve as steadfast sentinels for the African Burial Ground Project: Ms. Mary Lacey Madison of Harlem, N.Y., Ms. Miriam Francis of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Ms. Eloise Dicks of the Bronx, N.Y., and others.

Help Us Get The Word Out!

To insure that there is the widest possible dissemination of information about the remaining competition, we need your help. If you belong to a professional society, fraternal or religious organization, or any other group with members who may be interested in competing in the Memorial competition, we need you. Please volunteer to distribute our detailed brochures announcing the competition throughout your organization or agency.

Also, if your organization would like to participate in special events associated with memorialization activities, or if you would like to volunteer with our office on future planned events, please contact us. This is one of the many important roles that the community can play.

Anticipated Future Events:

As part of the competition process, public forums will be held in order to solicit community input prior to the final selections. Please look forward to an announcement of dates and times. For further information about any of the above, please contact:

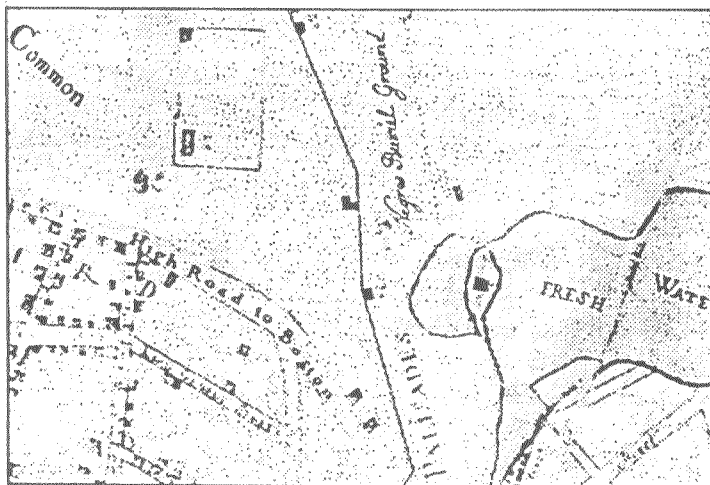
Peggy King-Jorde, Project Exec., 26 Federal Plaza, Rm. 1605, N.Y.C. 10278. Tel.: 212-264-6949, Fax: 212-264-4082 or e-mail: peggy.king-jorde@gsa.gov ♦♦♦



African Burial Ground Update

□ Reconstruction of the Foley Square begins.

On Thursday, October 16, 1997, the City of New York launched an \$18 million project designed to renovate the Foley Square area. Proposed plans include a 5 acre, two level public plaza with a fountain, amphitheater, newly planted trees, and outdoor seating.



A portion of the Maerschall's Plan of N.Y. showing the Foley Sq. area in 1754. (Stokes Iconography, Vol. I, Pl.34)

While bronze sidewalk medallions and a black granite sculpture, entitled "Triumph of the Human Spirit" by award winning African American artist Lorenzo Pace are expected to add to the area's new look, they will also serve as reminders of the area's rich, multi-cultural past.

Foley Square was once part of the Commons, an area encompassing Collect or Fresh Water Pond. Lying in close proximity to the African Burial Ground (see map above), the pond was once a sacred site for the indigenous Lenape population prior to European settlement. Sometime after 1640 a number of Africans, freed by their Dutch enslavers, were given land in the area as well.

By the early 19th century, tanneries and other early forms of industry led to the pond's pollution. Believing it to be the source of epidemics, city officials paid workers to fill the pond with earth from the surrounding hills. Within a few decades, it had become part of the site known as Five Points, New York City's first working class community. Census records for the late 18th century and early 19th, indicate that Africans took up residence in the area, soon followed by Irish, German, Jewish and Italian immigrants.

— E. Brown

□ **OPEI Volunteers Resurge Efforts to Commemorate African Burial Ground.** After two rejections from the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC), the Volunteers for the African Burial Ground Project have decided to make another attempt to commemorate the New York African Burial Ground with a stamp. The new campaign has expanded from requesting a single stamp to proposing a series of stamps that would commemorate the project. A Commemorative Stamp Series would best honor the enslaved and free African men, women and children who were instrumental in the building of New York City's physical landscape and economic prosperity.

Despite the fact that an earlier petition for an African Burial Ground stamp was submitted containing over 20,000 signatures, and a later one contained over 100,000 signatures from 40 states across the United States and 16 countries abroad, including Ghana, Senegal, Italy, France and Tanzania, it was rejected in 1995 and again in 1996. The CSAC members offered no specific reason for the petition's rejection, but noted that the post office issues a limited number of stamps based on subjects of "national interest."

The Volunteers for the African Burial Ground are committed to the national and international recognition and preservation of the heritage of Africans and their descendants in the Americas. Their goal is to collect 1,000,000 (1 million) signatures to submit to CSAC and to the Postmaster General for the creation of an African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Series. The new campaign was launched on October 25, 1997. We are certain that this 18th century National Historic Landmark which originally contained the bodies of 10-20,000 of our African ancestors, merits acknowledgement. A stamp series is one way to honor these ancestors and to educate the world on the history of enslavement, north and south, in the United States.

If you would like to join the African Burial Ground Volunteers in making the Commemorative Stamp Series a reality, please contact Marie-Alice Devieux at the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI) @ 212-432-5707. Petitions and information are available at OPEI (see page 15) and accessible on the World Wide Web at rasul@dorsai.org. — C.D. Pittman, M.A. Devieux

□ **African Burial Ground to get New Web Site.** OPEI Volunteers Rasheed Bell and Craig Taylor's media production company, Concrete Jungle, Inc., (<http://www.concrete-jungle.com>), will be putting the OPEI African Burial Ground Project on the Internet in the very near future. Public Educator, Marie-Alice Devieux, has done a very thorough job of organizing the extensive data to be contained on the web site. Soon you will be able to view and to download past issues of the *Update*, as well as other ABG information. We will keep you posted. — D. Wright

MINI CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Compiled by Chadra D. Pittman



□ Quilt Art by Peggie L. Hartwell
(see details under Caelum Gallery)

□ OPEI Upcoming Events: African Burial Ground Film Festival. U.S. Customs House, 6 World Trade Center on Dec. 20 and Dec. 30, 1997 from 12 noon to 5:00 pm. Please call 212-432-5707 to RSVP.

□ In celebration of Native American Heritage Month, the N.Y. regional office of the Environmental Protection Agency sponsored singer Joanne Shenandove's performance at the 290 Broadway building. A member of the Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse), Iroquois nation, Joanne sang about native traditions and spiritual perspectives concerning their land, the role of women and the value of work. Surrounded by commemorative artwork honoring the African Burial Ground, one of the songs which held the greatest appeal was Joanne's tribute to elders, "those who dream beyond the sky." For information concerning upcoming events, call (212) 637-3531.

□ Caelum Gallery, located at 580 Broadway, Suite 902, between Prince and Houston Streets, will present a solo exhibition of Peggie Hartwell's quilt art Dec. 9th through 20th. Peggie Hartwell is an African American artist whose career included nine years as a modern jazz dancer in Europe and the Middle East. Her work reflects the work of Horace Pippin, Romare Bearden, and Jacob Lawrence and is part of the the permanent collection of the American Craft Museum and the National Afro-American Museum of Culture, as well as numerous private collections. Peggie's future projects may include a quilt for the African Burial Ground. For further information call (212) 966-7686.

□ The Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 West 125th Street, NYC. "Transforming the Crown: African, Asian and Caribbean Artists in Britain, 1966-1996." Oct. 15th through March, 1998. "Transforming the Crown" is an unprecedented exhibition of 140 works in virtually every media. This exhibit features the works of 58 established, mid-career, and emerging artists and serves as a framework for investigating nationality, spirituality, identity, and diaspora political themes at the forefront of current international debate. For additional information call: 212-864-4500.

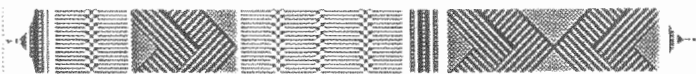
□ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 100 Fifth Avenue, NYC, presents "Master Hand: Individuality and Creativity among Yoruba Sculptors" now through Mar., 1998. Approximately 50 wood sculptures are displayed, including masks, containers, freestanding figures and architectural posts that are attributed to individual Yoruba master sculptors from Nigeria. For additional information call 212-879-5500.

□ The Children's Museum of Manhattan, The Tisch Building, 212 West 83rd Street, NYC on Sat., Dec. 27th 1:30 and 3:00 p.m. presents a workshop in which children learn traditions from the African American holiday, Kwanzaa, in a special performance by Spirit Ensemble.

□ The Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 West 125th St., NYC. Kwanzaa Family Day, Sat., Dec. 27th @ 2:00 pm. Award winning authors and publishers of Just Us Books, Cheryl Willis Hudson and Wade Hudson, honor the writers of literature for African American children with a reading and presentation of their book, *In Praise of Our Fathers and Mothers*. This anthology features the work of Gwendolyn Brooks, Tom Feelings, Virginia Hamilton and many more. The program will include a discussion and book readings. Admission to the book program is free. There will also be a special Kwanzaa Creativity Class for children ages 8-12 where young people can create unique Kwanzaa gifts. Costs of materials is \$6.00. For additional information call (212) 864-4500.



COMMUNITY VOICES



Next year the African Burial Ground will be considered by the U.S. government for nomination as a World Heritage site. But efforts to keep public awareness high and supporters of the site actively involved should be part of an ongoing process. We asked our readers the following question: *What individual or collective actions do you think should be taken to bring the significance of the African Burial Ground into the 21st century?*

Sharon Dennis Wyeth

Author, Montclair New Jersey

A sacred place can be healing. An annual ritual gathering at the site of the Burial Ground would offer us an opportunity to affirm the positive in our community and to pay homage to the struggle of our ancestors. This could be a time when we listen to each other's stories through the work of African American poets, novelists and musicians; a time to contemplate visualizations of ourselves, past, present and future, through the work of our visual artists. As we have gathered in other parts of our country, let those of us in the New York area gather at the Burial Ground at least once a year, to draw strength from the spirits of the people who lie there and to witness the strength we possess ourselves. Let us bring our young people with us and entrust them with the significance of the Burial Ground as a spiritual place.

**John Arbogast, Federal Government Worker
and Concerned Citizen**

Washington, D.C.

With public consciousness towards the matter of slavery having been raised by President Clinton's Initiative on Race and the release of the film *Amistad* (see, for example, the cover story of the Dec. 8th edition of *Newsweek*), there, in fact, has never been a better time for individual and collective actions to bring the significance of the African Burial Ground (ABG) into the 21st century.

A renewal of the sense of excitement and commitment that accompanied the uncovering of the ABG early in this decade is now needed to win a new series of victories in taking the ABG "to the next level" — i.e., the position of national and international prominence that it clearly merits.

There is, quite simply, no other site anywhere that matches the monumental historical, cultural and symbolic significance of the ABG as it relates to the institution of slavery. As such, the ABG affords a golden opportunity to have this nation pay its respects to and suitably honor the traditions, the dignity and sacrifice, and the contributions of those of our ancestors whose forced labor was instrumental in building this country.

With this in mind, the undersigned have submitted a proposal to the President's Advisory Board on Race which posits that the ABG should become a centerpiece of the President's Initiative, in that it offers an ideal vehicle for positive, concrete actions that will serve to both honor and enlighten—and which will have a positive resonance with the vast majority of Americans.

The proposal sets forth specific items for Presidential/Executive, Congressional and private action. For example, one is the construction at or near the site of a magnificent, state of the art memorial museum and visitor/interpretive center complex, on the scale of Ellis Island or the Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Such a museum complex would stand shoulder-to-shoulder and in honest partnership with other bastions of American's past and the American Dream, located nearby in America's Gateway City: Ellis Island, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, and the Statue of Liberty. In addition to serving as a repository, it would be in concept and design like those sites, a mecca, a symbolic "home." It would be the first truly national, and international site devoted to this nation's African American heritage, something which is long overdue.

[Ed. note: For additional points covered in this proposal, please write to OPEI].



Taking the African Burial Ground into the 21st Century (Continued from page 1)

Few educators, inside or outside of the historical disciplines are aware of this history which predates the great black migration to the North by three centuries.

Long forgotten is the New Amsterdam where Africans provided the labor force for constructing government buildings and the roads of Dutch New Amsterdam. Few historians document the true extent of enslavement in the North during the eighteenth century, when enslaved Africans made up 25% of the New York City population. The Civil War Draft Riots, where hundreds of African Americans were killed, is little more than a footnote in the retelling of the history of the city of New York.

The collective amnesia of the African presence continues to prevail. Honoring by remembering the ancestors of the African Burial Ground is essential to taking the project and the landmark site into the 21st century.

Taking the African Burial ground into the 21st century with all of its technological possibilities will still require critical examination of the big picture, and accepting and looking beyond it to filling in more details of the lives and deaths of those Africans who were crucial to the building and prosperity of New York.

The presidential goal of realizing one America in the 21st century can only be achieved by recognizing the contributions of all Americans. One of the clearest paths to

successfully living in a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic society is understanding that all ethnic, religious, cultural and racial groups have their own uniquely meaningful histories, within the history of the larger society. Cognizance of the achievements and contributions of African Americans which span more than three centuries is essential to that goal.

A vision of African Americans as integral to American history is sorely needed. The superficial recognition that comes only during the month of February is not enough. Indeed, Mr. President we concur that becoming one America in the 21st century cannot be a goal that money can buy, that power can compel, or that technology can create. It is something that can only come from the human spirit.

The challenge clearly before us is to thoroughly examine our past, to educate ourselves about that past, to understand the present and to make way for a future of One America in the 21st century.



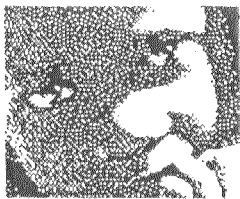
During Black History Month, OPEI staff will lead educational tours of the African Burial Ground every Tuesday and Thursday. Please call 212-432-5707 for further information.

Short STORY

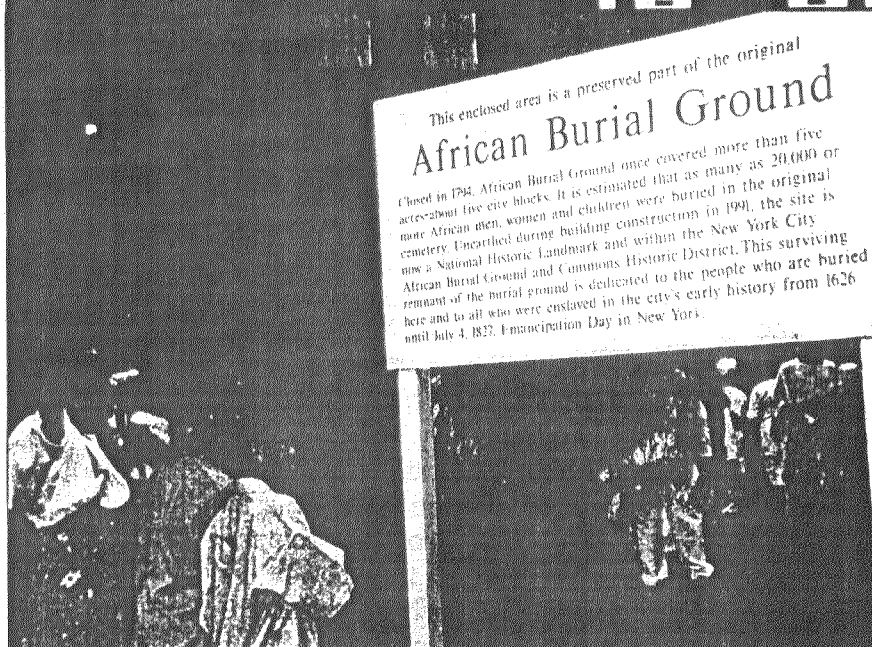


GUIDELINES

- o This contest is open to students in elementary, junior high and high school.
- o One winner and one runner up will be chosen from three categories: elementary (3rd - 6th grades), junior high school and high school.
- o Winning entries will be published in *Update*.
- o Story length should be 1200 words or less and focus on the subject of the African Burial Ground or the early New York African presence.
- o Evaluation of stories will be based on theme, clarity and originality.
- o Deadline for submission of stories is March 31, 1998. Please write to OPEI for an official entry form.



TAKING THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND INTO THE 21ST CENTURY



Left: Members of New York City's Falasha Community gathered for a special commemoration ceremony at the African Burial Ground in August of 1997.

Photo credit: Brother Eliyahu

**"EDUCATION IS OUR PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE,
FOR TOMORROW BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE
WHO PREPARE FOR IT TODAY." --- Malcolm X**

Right: The Lincoln H.S. Gospel and Ensemble Choir of Yonkers, N.Y. led by Mrs. Cecilia Myers, performs at the 290 Broadway building for the Fall 1997 Educators Symposium.

Photo credit: Tamara R. Jubilee





Book: Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail.
Author: W. Jeffrey Bolster
Publisher: Harvard Univ. Press
 Cambridge, Mass.
Price: \$27.00
Reviewer: Lisa King, Ph.D.C.

What do Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes and Alex Haley have in common? Besides being African American writers, they were all bounded by the maritime traditions and trades of seafaring at different stages in their lives. *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, a recent work by W. Jeffrey Bolster, introduces us to African Americans in the maritime world. Bolster skillfully blends the narratives of enslaved men with ships' logs, custom house documents, and other contemporary accounts to bring the world of the Black Jack Tar alive for the reader.

Black Jacks focuses primarily on the experiences of African American sailors from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries.

Seafaring connected these men with the wider world. It gave some the opportunity to convey information from plantation to plantation throughout the West Indies and the southern United States, as well as to seaports in the North and across the Atlantic. Besides being conduits of information, African American sailors stood out as examples of manhood and independence; they served as subversive counter symbols to the growing racist ideology during the post-Revolutionary and ante bellum era in the United States. Many northern based, free African American mariners accumulated wealth, purchased real estate, and even captained fleets of their own.

The book fleshes out the little known but often alluded to world of maritime enslavement. Furthermore, it suggests enslaved Africans were bound to privateers during European wars for empires during the eighteenth century. Equiano's narrative revealed that prize money belonging to enslaved Africans often went to the master, as his had after he served on board a privateer for six years. *Black Jacks* shows that besides deep-sea sailors, enslaved African Americans served as interpreters for enslaved Africans, as river and harbor pilots, watermen, fishermen, boatmen and coasters prior to the Civil War.

Although life on board ship was not ideal — African American seamen were still subject to individual and collective acts of prejudice and discrimination at times—many found life at sea preferable

because it offered a degree of protection, freedom and dignity denied them on land. The rough egalitarianism and the strong fraternity of the Atlantic maritime culture was appealing.

As a maritime tradition, men were judged and respected for their nautical skills and knowledge; not for the color of their skin. Bolster notes that while African American seamen held sway over white "boys" and white captains and crews deferred to enslaved river pilots during an earlier period, they were generally relegated to the menial service positions of cook and steward by the end of the nineteenth century.

Black Jacks is a well researched, well balanced, and well written account of the experience of men of African descent who made their livelihood from the sea. W. Jeffrey Bolster brilliantly illuminates the tragic and triumphant world of these pioneering men and reveals their crucial position as "cultural mediators in the formation of Black America." More importantly, he gives voice to neglected African ancestors and reinstates them in their rightful place in African, American, maritime, and world history.

Lisa King, Ph.D.C. is a member of the African Burial Ground Project Historical Research Team at Howard University



ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?

Please submit your name and/or corrections to:

OPEI, 6 World Trade Center
 U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239
 New York, New York 10048

HOLIDAY BOOK LIST

Compiled by Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

A growing number of African Americans are beginning to examine and celebrate Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is an original African American holiday that draws upon the cultural traditions of more than 18 million people from Africa and the African diaspora. Some celebrate Kwanzaa instead of Christmas. Many celebrate both Kwanzaa and Christmas. Kwanzaa is celebrated seven days, from December 26 through January 1.

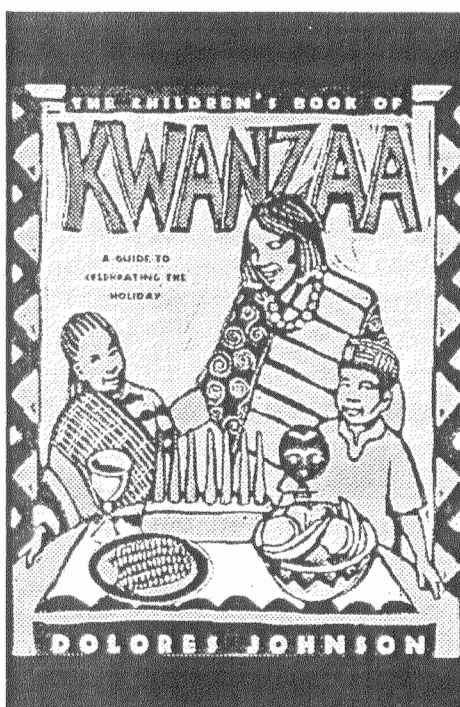
Each of the seven days is dedicated to the Nguzo Saba or Seven Principles. These principles are: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith). While Kwanzaa is not celebrated in Africa, it was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga based on African countries around the harvest of crops. In Swahili, Kwanzaa literally means "First Fruits of the Harvest."

Kwanzaa: An Everyday Resource & Instructional Guide by David Anderson/SANKOFA N.Y.: Thomas Gumbs Pub. 1993.

Celebrate: Traditional Ethnic Entertaining in America by Hilary Davis N.Y.: Crescent Books, 1992.

Kwanzaa: The Seven Principles written and compiled by Rod Terry, N.Y.: Peter Pauper Press Inc. 1996.

Kwanzaa: A Family Affair by Mildred Pitts Walter N.Y.: Aron Books, 1996.



The Children's Book of Kwanzaa by Delores Johnson (shown above). N.Y.: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1996.

A Treasury of African American Christmas Stories by Bettye Collier- Thomas N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co. 1997.

Kwanzaa Karamu Cooking & Crafts for a Kwanzaa Feast by April A. Brady MN.: Carolrhoda Books, 1995.

Kwanzaa: Origin, Concepts, Practice by Dr. Maulana Karenga CA.: Kwaida Pub., 1977.

The Seven Days of Kwanzaa: How to Celebrate Them by Angela Shelf Medearis N.Y.: Scholastic Inc., 1994.

The Complete Kwanzaa: Celebrating Our Cultural Harvest by Dorothy Winbush Riley N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1995.

A Kwanzaa Fable by Eric Copage N.Y.: Wm. Morrow Co., 1995.

Seven Candles for Kwanzaa by Andrea Davis Pinkney pictures by Brian Pinkney N.Y.: Dial Book for Young Readers, 1993.

Kwanzaa Fun by Linda Robertson & Julia Pearson. N.Y.: Larousse Kingfisher Chamber Inc., 1996.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



PETITION FOR AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COMMEMORATIVE STAMP SERIES STATUS

We the undersigned parties, who are committed to the recognition and preservation of the heritage of Africans and their descendants in the Americas, request that the African Burial Ground in the National Historic District of New York be recommended for the Commemorative Stamp Series status and approved by the Postmaster General.

There is no age requirement to sign the petition

[illegible]

Return to: Office of Public Education & Interpretation
of the African Burial Ground
6 World Trade Center
U.S. Custom House, Room 239
New York, N.Y. 10048
Tel. (212) 432-5707 Fax (212) 432-5920

Please return as soon as possible.
All Petitions must be returned by March 1, 1998



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